

have to show a reason to compel your return home.”

Francisco Guerrero, 59, does not understand why Glenn's intent to save his father's life isn't enough to support the younger man's visa application.

“Sometimes they should try to be more understanding of the situation,” the elder Guerrero said. “I think these people don't care. They should think of the purpose of the person who is coming here.”

KEY ISSUES FOR FILIPINOS

There are 389 other patients in Hawai'i who are waiting for a kidney—a wait that can last up to seven years. More than 100 of those patients were born in the Philippines.

U.S. Consulate officials say Filipinos are treated in the same way as any other foreign nationals who wish to come to the United States on a temporary visa. But with few systems in place to track visitors once they have arrived and note when they have departed, overworked officers at the consulate are often the only line of defense against unwanted visitors.

“They have gotten tougher,” said Jessica Vaughan, a former chief consular official at the U.S. Consulate in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Vaughan is now a senior policy analyst for the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington.

The law requires consular officials to assume that every applicant hopes to move to the United States permanently, according to Vaughan. It places the burden on the applicants to prove they would return to their home country.

The issue is complicated for Filipino organ donors because:

Many applicants are poor, with little property and money or a good job to return to in the Philippines.

Filipinos already are one of the largest groups seeking permanent visas to the United States. Any person seeking a temporary visa, who also has requested a permanent visa, faces likely rejection for a short stay. In some cases, officials are so backlogged in reviewing visas that only now are they considering applications dating back to 1990.

There are already an estimated 85,000 Filipinos who live illegally in the United States. Officials say it is likely that most of them simply overstayed their temporary visas.

Hawai'i lawmakers have asked the State Department to look into the organ donor cases at St. Francis.

Rep. Ed Case, D-Hawai'i, said he plans to reintroduce a bill to remove any presumption that an applicant intends to stay in the United States if they are coming here for family emergencies. Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawai'i, co-sponsored the bill when it was first introduced in late 2003.

Hawai'i's two senators have written letters to the State Department asking officials there to take a close look at the problem.

“I'm willing to take the chance of loosening the standard because he or she has demonstrated his or her mother is going to die on the island of Maui,” Case said. “It is the right thing to do.”

Case said he supports keeping the borders safe. But the current law “puts a disproportionate burden on the Filipino community and that's not fair,” he said. The U.S. Consulate, Case said, is “not entitled to deny an American his or her life.”

EXPENSES, LONG WAITS

Since 9/11, the total number of all types of visas granted in the United States has declined because there have been fewer applicants. Vaughan, the former consular official, stresses that each application is evaluated one at a time.

“It's not discrimination,” she said. “It may be that more people qualify from Japan

than in the Philippines. The conditions in that country—economic, social or political conditions—are factored into the consular officer's decision.”

Although the Philippine government has taken an interest in the transplant patients at St. Francis and their families, one official concedes there isn't much it can do.

“We cannot intervene,” said Eva Ditung, Philippines deputy consul general. “We can help on the Philippine side and facilitate their papers, but the ball is on the (U.S.) State Department side. This is a humanitarian undertaking.”

Complicating matters is the lengthy—and expensive—application process. Cathy Bailey, transplant evaluation coordinator at St. Francis, said it takes about a year to compile all the medical information required for a kidney donor in another country, compared with about three months for a donor in the United States.

The U.S. government also requires a long list of documents, from income-tax returns and bank statements, to prove the kidney recipient can support the organ donor for the six months they are required to stay in the United States.

Tissue and blood tests for each potential donor cost about \$3,500, and the results are good for only a few months before they must be performed again, Bailey said. The donor also must pay for travel to Manila for an interview with U.S. Consulate officials and pay for hotel expenses while there as well as for medical tests and doctors' fees.

She said most kidney patients rely on Medicare to pay for the surgery, which costs about \$200,000, and for about \$30,000 worth of drugs annually to ensure the body does not reject the donated organ. Patients don't travel to the Philippines for the surgery because Medicare would not cover drug costs upon their return.

“They almost always come to me crying,” Bailey said. “It's not like I can do anything. It is very costly for these people.”

LAHAINA WOMAN'S FLIGHT

Hilaria Taborada, a 51-year-old Lahaina cashier, has spent a lot of money on medical tests and visa fees and untold hours worrying about her future ever since she was diagnosed with kidney failure in 1999.

One nephew was determined to be a good match as a donor but was too ill to undergo the surgery; a visa application by another nephew was rejected in December because it was deemed that he had no compelling reason to return home.

Taborada undergoes dialysis at home, but still must travel to the hospital for frequent tests.

“How many times I'm going back and forth to the hospital,” she sighed. “I always have infections.”

Taborada's brother is transferring his own property to the nephew in the hope that the U.S. government will recognize the property as a reason for the nephew to return to the Philippines.

Vaughan said that when she worked for the U.S. Consulate in Trinidad, the refusal rate for nonimmigrant visas for people from that West Indies nation (Trinidad and Tobago) was 50 percent.

She said most of the people she dealt with had similar backgrounds as those Filipinos seeking temporary visas.

“Officers do the best they can, based on the information and time they have available,” she said. But “it's a very imperfect science.”

RECOGNIZING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. CELESTINE PARISH

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of the 75th Anniversary of St. Celestine Parish in Elmwood Park, Illinois. I am proud of the continuous support and inspiration this parish has provided to the people of Elmwood Park for the past 75 years, and I would like to thank the parishioners of St. Celestine's for their dedicated service.

St. Celestine's has served as an essential part of the surrounding community since 1929, when construction on the Parish church first began. Despite the daunting conditions of the time, construction was completed in 1930, and out of the despair and poverty of the Great Depression, a new beacon of hope emerged for the people of Elmwood Park.

Today, St. Celestine's continues to be an inspiration to the Elmwood Park community. This parish provides a prime example of what can be accomplished when we work together for the common good. The parishioners of St. Celestine's have an impressive history of giving their time, talent, and resources to their community.

What truly makes this parish special are the people of Elmwood Park and its surrounding communities. Week after week, the 3,000 registered families come to St. Celestine's with smiles on their faces and a warm welcome for any and all new parishioners.

Now as St. Celestine's celebrates their 75th anniversary, I ask you all to take a moment and recognize the importance of places like St. Celestine's in communities all across America.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in recognizing St. Celestine church and all of its parishioners for their 75 years of dedication and service to their community.

WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY 60TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MELISSA L. BEAN

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Woodstock, Illinois Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the 60th anniversary of their founding.

In March 1945, the Woodstock Journal called for business, industrial and professional leaders to form “a real live-wire chamber of commerce.” Since that time, northern Illinois has experienced phenomenal growth, in no small part due to the activity of its business community.

At the Woodstock Chamber's organizational meeting, a representative from the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce told members that “The Chamber of Commerce is a voice of business, industry and agriculture.” That description holds true today, with the Chamber working to ensure a favorable business climate and promoting the area's economic and social progress. Throughout the years, members of the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce